

VZCZCXRO1547
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHMOS
DE RUEHKU #1986/01 1501641
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 301641Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4787
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 001986

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR NEA/PPD (DBENZE), NEA/ARP (DBERNS), AND NEA/PI (OKIRBY)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [KMPI](#) [PHUM](#) [KU](#) [FREEDOM](#) [AGENDA](#)

SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: MEPI, BMENA, AND EXCHANGES BASIS OF
HEARTY USG SUPPORT FOR KUWAITI WOMEN AS ELECTION NEARS

REF: A) KUWAIT 1889
B) KUWAIT 1833
C) KUWAIT 1244
D) KUWAIT 605
E) 05 KUWAIT 4144
F) 05 KUWAIT 2732
G) 05 KUWAIT 2091

ENTIRE TEXT SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. NOT FOR INTERNET
DISTRIBUTION.

11. (SBU) Summary: The Embassy has pursued a consistent, comprehensive plan in support of women's empowerment and full political participation in Kuwait. That support has involved more than 350 Kuwaiti women in professional development and exchange programs, public diplomacy activities, regional conferences, training sessions, networking opportunities, and consultations with specialists in preparation for their unprecedented inclusion in the June 2006 elections, originally scheduled for July 2007. Additionally, more than \$150,000 has been committed to the political education and advancement of Kuwaiti women through MEPI Small Grants projects. Virtually all of the women political activists in Kuwait have been supported in some significant way by USG programs. Although work remains in both long-term support for women's rights and overall democratization, we can be justly proud of the Freedom Agenda accomplishments achieved with our Kuwaiti partners. End Summary.

Amir Dissolves Parliament, Early Elections Due

12. (SBU) The Embassy has made significant efforts over the past two years to offer training and professional development opportunities to women in Kuwait to bolster their quest for full political rights that were granted on May 16, 2005. On May 21, 2006, confronted by heated and divisive debates on the topic of reform of Kuwait's electoral constituencies (ref A), the Amir dissolved the National Assembly. His dissolution of the Parliament forced the scheduling of constitutionally mandated elections to be held a year early, on June 29, 2006.

13. (SBU) Many of the Embassy's activities and programs that aid the political development of Kuwait's women and democratic institutions were based on a July 2007 election date and included campaign schools, voter awareness programs, and other comprehensive activities, some projected to run a full year. A clear preference by Kuwaiti women to forego training and concentrate on hands-on experience gained from running campaigns has now forced the cancellation of some programs and the reshaping of others. Post is confident that the training previously provided to Kuwaiti women has them well positioned to play an influential role in the electoral process. Creative programming already in place through significant support from Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and public diplomacy efforts, will further enable them to successfully participate in campaigns and voter education activities, and to cast

their ballots.

Public Diplomacy Programs Support Women

14. (SBU) The Embassy has made important inroads using Public Diplomacy programs, including the International Visitor Leadership Program, the Fulbright program, and other professional exchanges to support advocates of women's political rights and women's rights activists.

International Visitor Leadership Programs:

Since FY 2003, 11 Kuwaitis (10 women and 1 man) participated in IVLP projects directly related to women's rights. One of the Embassy's IVLP alumni, Dr. Masouma Al-Mubarak, became Kuwait's first woman Minister in 2005, while two others, Dr. Rola Dashti and Dr. Fatima al-Abdali, have announced their candidacies in the upcoming election.

FY 2003

--Mr. Amer Al-Tameemi, Women as Leaders in the Public and Private Sectors, May 12-31, 2003
--Ms. Kawthar Al-Jouan, Promoting Effective NGO Leadership for Women, February 24-March 14, 2003 (head of Women's Training and Development NGO)
--Dr. Fatima Al-Abdali, Women as Political Partners, October 21-November 5, 2002 (running for National Assembly)
--Dr. Rola Dashti, Women as Political Partners, October 21-November 5, 2002 (running for National Assembly)
--Ms. Laila Al-Awadi, Women as Political Partners, October 21-November 5, 2002 (working as advisor to first female Cabinet Minister)
--Ms. Nadia Al-Sharrah, Women as Political Partners, October

KUWAIT 00001986 002 OF 003

21-November 5, 2002 (campaign manager for Rola Dashti)

FY 2004

--Dr. Suad Al-Ansari, Teaching English as a Second Language, February 2-19, 2004 (head of English Training at Ministry of Education)
--Dr. Wafaa Al-Yaseen, Curriculum Development and Civic Education, October 6-24, 2003, FY 2004,

FY 2005

--Ms. Thikra Al-Rashidi, "Promoting Rule of Law and Judicial Reform," January 10-28, 2005 (she focuses on women's rights)

FY 2006

--Dr. Suad Al-Tararwah, "Promoting Rule of Law and Judicial Reform," February 27 to March 17, 2006 (she focuses on women's legal rights and is the only female member of the Municipal Housing Committee)
--Ms. Abrar Al-Awadi, "Young Leaders, Effecting Social, Political and Economic Change," May 8 to 26, 2006 (she is encouraging Kuwaitis to work in the private sector and working with Islamic charities)

Georgetown Leadership Seminar:

--Dr. Alanoud Al-Sharekh, March 26-31, 2006, Georgetown University (she focuses on women's legal rights, is a member of the Women's Cultural Society, and completed a successful MEPI small grants project on discrimination against women)

Kuwaiti Fulbright Scholar Grantees:

This year alone, all three Kuwaiti Fulbright researchers are women's rights activists.

--Dr. Zahra Hussein, College of English Literature and Linguistics, Kuwait University, FY 06 (nine months)
--Dr. Manal Al-Fadhala, College of Engineering, Kuwait University FY 06 (nine months)
--Dr. Wafaa Al-Yaseen, College of Education, Kuwait University FY 06 (three months)

Continued Support with Diverse Programs

¶5. (SBU) Ongoing public affairs programming stresses the positive and productive role of women in American society, supporting the stance of Kuwaiti women activists through instructive examples and models. These programs have included DVCs with American women activists and political analysts, and gatherings that offer opportunities for networking across societal barriers, such as the Embassy's celebration of International Women's Day that brought together more than 50 Kuwaiti women leaders and honored their contributions in a spectrum of fields.

MEPI: Small Grants, Big Impact

¶6. (SBU) As part of the Embassy's MEPI outreach, approximately \$151,000 has been committed to an increasing number of projects devoted to the women's pillar.

--In FY04, one project, a gender budgeting study, was implemented.

--In FY05, two projects were funded, a women's rights survey and a brochure identifying and proposing changes to laws that disadvantage women.

--In FY06, three women's-pillar projects have been approved by the Embassy's MEPI working group, including a political education newsletter, a women's leadership training seminar, and a women's legal and political rights and legal reform seminar series.

MEPI-related Conferences, Training and Exchanges

¶7. (SBU) In addition to support rendered through MEPI's Small Grants program, MEPI-related conferences, training programs and exchanges have reached hundreds of Kuwaiti women, including students and experienced political rights campaigners, setting the stage for their political activism at present and in the future. In its two years of existence, the MEPI Business Internship Program for Young Middle Eastern Women has sent three Kuwaitis to America and the Middle East Entrepreneurial Training (MEET U.S.) program has sent four Kuwaiti women over two years to America. Two librarians, both women, will be heading to the United States on a study tour this June and another woman has applied for the MEPI Independent Media Project to establish a women's issues oriented magazine in Kuwait.

¶8. (SBU) International training workshops and conferences have attracted a number of influential and politically active Kuwaiti

KUWAIT 00001986 003 OF 003

women. NDI has trained over 100 Kuwaiti women with MEPI funding and, with IRI, has also trained 20 Kuwaiti women (and more than 50 other Arab women) in a regional campaign school held in Kuwait in September 2005. Kuwait's MEPI-funded INJAZ (Junior Achievement) program has taken off in 2005 and 2006 with more than 380 high school students participating, about half of them girls and young women.

¶9. (SBU) Kuwaiti women have participated in the following MEPI- and BMENA-related conferences as part of the Embassy's plan to advance women's leadership in Kuwait:

- Five in the Businesswomen's Summit, Tunisia, May 2005;
- One in the Democracy Assistance Dialogue, Venice, July 2005;
- One in the Arab Women's Legal Network, Jordan, November 2005;
- Two in the Demos Institute Project conference, Morocco, December 2-3, 2005;
- One in the Arab Civitas Conference on Civic Education, Jordan, February 2006;
- Five in the Women as Leaders of Change Conference, Bahrain, March 26, 2006;
- and
- Two in the World Movement for Democracy Assembly, Turkey, April, ¶2006.

From Now until the Election

10. (SBU) The Embassy continues to provide reinforcement for those women who have entered the political contest. Five women registered as candidates on May 25, the day the rolls opened and that number has now grown to 20 and may continue to expand. Working in close cooperation with the Mission, NDI has re-established its presence and has launched assistance to Kuwaiti voter education, political participation, and communication projects that form the basis for campaigns by Kuwaiti women candidates. EmbOffs, sensitive to Kuwaiti concerns about external interference in domestic projects, are helping to put the candidates in touch with NDI and other local organizations providing electoral support and guidance. We also provided guidance to UNDP on how it could be supportive at this juncture. EmbOffs also are engaged in an active program of monitoring public opinion through increased attendances at diwanias and observing satellite and broadcast television reporting and commentary, so that they can provide feedback to the candidates and the programming agencies on which strategies are proving to be successful.

***** *
For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable s>

You can also access the site through the
State Department's Classified SIPRNET website
***** *

LEBARON